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Increasing Choice and Flexibility: A Message from the Minister

Our education system requires flexibility to meet the needs of our students in a changing world. Students are seeking choices that are relevant to their career goals. Technological advances have opened an array of previously unavailable educational possibilities. Furthermore, the boundaries between sectors have blurred with students enrolling in college and university courses while in their Senior Years.

In 2001, Manitoba Education and Youth proposed initiatives in response to the changing educational needs in our province. *Increasing Choice and Flexibility: Changes to Senior Years Graduation Requirements: A Status Report*, released in June 2002, was the culmination of a two-year process of consultations with the educational community. This report is available at <http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/ks4/policy/gradreq/choice-flexibility.html>.

The goal of the proposed changes initiated in 2001 was to increase student opportunities to make educational choices. The intent was to give students optimal flexibility in pursuing career or personal interests while preserving a core of learning common to all.

The following changes are providing increased flexibility for Senior Years schools in Manitoba:

- *Categories of Credits*: Categories have been simplified from four to two: Compulsory and Optional.
- *School-Initiated Courses (SICs) and Student-Initiated Projects (SIPs)*: SICs have increased from eight to eleven, and SIPs from two to three.
- *Distance Learning Courses*: Students have the option of taking distance learning courses in either print or online format, including those from outside the province. Two documents related to distance learning are available at <http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/ks4/docs/policy/online_learning/>.
- *Challenge for Credit Option*: This option offers students the opportunity to apply prior knowledge in a subject area by demonstrating achievement in the learning outcomes of that course and receiving credit. Province-wide implementation in 2003-2004 follows a year of school division/district planning.
- *Dual Credits*: Students have the opportunity to take college and university courses for Senior Years graduation credit as well as university/college credit, to a maximum of five credits. This initiative is expected to enhance students' academic preparedness for post-secondary education, shorten the time required to complete a post-secondary program, and eliminate the need to complete comparable courses at both educational levels.
- *Community Service (CSP)*: Students have an opportunity to earn one credit within the 28 credits required for graduation by volunteering. The civic knowledge, skills, and attitudes gained from such community activity can increase a student's self-esteem and maturity.
- *Substitution of Credits*: Principals have the flexibility to substitute a maximum of two Optional credits for two Compulsory credits within Senior 1 to Senior 4. This substitution is undertaken in rare situations.

Through a responsive and flexible education system we can encourage our students to make choices that will contribute to their success in learning and enrich their quality of life.

Honourable Ron Lemieux
Minister of Education and Youth

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Progress on the Manitoba K-S4 Agenda for Student Success

The Manitoba Kindergarten to Senior 4 (K–S4) Education Agenda for Student Success is organized around six priorities. This issue of *Education Manitoba* highlights the second priority, while also updating some items of general interest.

It is accepted educational wisdom that "collaboration among families, the schools, and the community improves the learning successes of *all* students" (*Manitoba K–S4 Education Agenda for Student Success 2002-2006*, p. 12). To implement the K–S4 Agenda, Manitoba Education and Youth focused on the following activities during the 2002–2003 school year.

1. *Enhancing the working relationship with the Manitoba Association of Parent Councils (MAPC).* With well over 200 members, MAPC presents the most unified parent voice in the province. By working with MAPC, the Department gains the collective insight from a parent organization and has a partner that can effectively interpret departmental strategies for parents. The Department supports MAPC and invites its representation on many departmental committees. Most of the following activities have occurred in collaboration with MAPC.

2. *Posting online descriptions of what students are learning in various grades and subject areas.* To help parents and the public develop a clearer understanding of the Manitoba curriculum from Kindergarten to Senior 4, the Department created a web page entitled Curriculum Information for Parents. A random entry to Grade 8 English Language Arts, for example, conveys a sense of how useful this resource can be for those who know little about our curriculum:

> In Grade 8, students...
> ...compare how they understand what they are reading, seeing, and hearing.
> For example: summarizing main ideas and understanding the meaning of specialized and technical vocabulary.

Curriculum Information for Parents has been posted for the English, French Immersion, and Français Programs at <http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/ks4/cur/parents/index.html>. A print copy can be downloaded from this site and is available on request. The Department plans to develop information for the Senior Years Technology Education Program during 2003–2004.

Several components have recently been added to the **K–S4 Agenda website** at <http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/ks4/agenda/>:

- **Support Documents:** New online documents related to school and school division/district planning include a province-wide summary of information on 2002–2003 school plans, a language of planning in education glossary, and a letter to school divisions/districts describing expectations for the next two years.
- **Research Links:** A list of useful research and information links is available for each priority area of the K–S4 Agenda.

The anticipated legislation on **appropriate educational programming for all students** was given first reading during the spring 2003 session of the legislature. Passage of the legislation was curtailed by the provincial election, but the proposed legislation is expected to be reintroduced at an upcoming session of the legislature.

The Department also published *A Time to Know: Where Direction to Go*, a planner outlining graduation requirements for Senior Years students. This document is available at <http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/ks4/docs/parents_grad/index.html>.

3. *Delivering information for parents.* At the request of school divisions/districts, the Department and MAPC delivered information sessions, which included sharing of an information binder for parents and communities. General information for parents is available online at <http://www3.edu.gov.mb.ca/metrored/infobox.jsp?for=parents>.

4. *Enhancing learning about parent and community involvement.* A bibliography of articles related to parent and community involvement was distributed at the information sessions. *Parental Involvement: A Bibliography (March 2002)* is available online from the Instructional Resources Unit (Library) at <http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/ks4/iru/>.

5. *Planning for conflict resolution.* Disagreement is a natural part of human interaction, including relationships between families and schools. To facilitate problem solving that improves students' chances for success, the Department is developing a guide for conflict resolution.

Resources for Multilevel Learning Communities

While many Kindergarten to Grade 8 schools in Manitoba combine more than one grade in their classrooms due to demographic necessity, some communities choose to establish multilevel classrooms because of the advantages they offer.

Based on research studies, it is clear that multilevel classrooms can provide many unique opportunities for best practice. When educators and parents have a clear understanding of the theoretical underpinnings that support a broad age range of students in one classroom for more than two years, quality learning is an outcome.

Following the educational surveys in 2002 and consultations with Hutterian colonies, rural communities, and urban centres, Manitoba Education and Youth developed a support document to address the needs of students, educators, and parents in multilevel learning communities. The print document *Independent Together: Supporting the Multilevel Learning Community* describes practical and adaptable strategies to manage multiple curricula and provide a rich teaching/learning context for a wide range of learners. It addresses topics such as the learning community and the independent learner, formative and summative assessment, differentiated instruction, integrated curricula, and a guided planning model for independent inquiry.

The print document, to be released in the fall of 2003, will also be posted on the Department's website at <http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k-12/multilevel/index.html>. In addition, an online resource with tools and strategies for supporting and enhancing learning and teaching in the multilevel classroom is under development.

These resources are designed to engage students, educators, and parents in developing independent learners within a multilevel community and to celebrate the uniqueness of each learner. With a clear understanding of the theoretical underpinnings for best practice in multilevel classrooms, and with adequate supports for multilevel teachers, quality learning and teaching can happen.

The Power of Collaboration

Manitoba schools with Senior 2 programming recently received the video *Sila Tungasuk—Inuit Observations on Climate Change* and the accompanying teacher's guide. These resources focus on the importance of combining traditional ecological knowledge and scientific knowledge in understanding and managing our environment.

What may not be apparent at first glance are the partnerships involved in the development of these resources. The video follows a year-long project initiated by the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) and the Inuit-run residents of the community of Sachs Harbour to document climate change in the Arctic. This partnership approach, which combined participatory workshops, interviews, community meetings, and fieldwork, illustrates how collaboration between scientists and indigenous populations can help us develop a better understanding of our planet. While the video focuses on an Inuit community, its messages about the value of traditional ecological knowledge are important for Manitobans.

When the video was released in 2000, Manitoba Education and Youth recognized its potential value in bringing learning to life for students and supporting the implementation of the new science curriculum. The curriculum emphasizes the interrelationships among science, technology, society and the environment and the contributions of women and men from many societies and cultural backgrounds in increasing our understanding of the world in which we live. To ensure effective use of the video, the Department developed a teacher's guide containing background information on climate change and traditional ecological knowledge, links to Manitoba's Senior 2 Science curriculum, and suggested learning activities and teaching strategies related to the video.

Major financial support for the development of the teacher's guide and purchase of the video was made possible by a grant from Manitoba's Sustainable Development Innovations Fund (SDIF). Representatives from IISD and the Manitoba Climate Change Connection also participated in the project.

This development process illustrates the power of partnerships. As educators we have many opportunities to initiate and participate in collaborations which are for the benefit of our students.

Sila Tungasuk DVD, the accompanying teacher's guide, and other resources are available from Manitoba Education and Youth's Learning Resources Distribution Centre at 1-800-661-7785.

Manitoba Programs in China

Yang Guang Qing School Celebrates Second Group of Manitoba Graduates

Now that another class of Chinese students from Yang Guang Qing School in Beijing has graduated with both a Manitoba diploma and a Chinese diploma, we are reminded of the intense pressure placed on these students to succeed. They must meet the requirements set out by the Chinese Education Authority and by the Manitoba government. Fortunately the Senior 4 Chinese examinations finish just before Chinese New Year in January, and even though students may write a Chinese university entrance examination in June, they have the opportunity to concentrate on their Manitoba courses from February to June.

In spite of the pressure, students enjoy the Manitoba program. The Manitoba curriculum offers students more opportunities to express themselves and to develop oral presentation skills, whereas the Chinese program involves more memorization as the Chinese marks are based totally on examinations. Last year a class of 18 students graduated with a Manitoba diploma. All these students have been accepted into Manitoba universities.

Clifford School Programs Grow

Clifford School in Guangzhou, China, offers two programs that use the Manitoba curriculum. Students in Senior 1 to Senior 4 may enroll in a blended Chinese/Manitoba bilingual program from which they have the opportunity to graduate with a Chinese diploma and a Manitoba diploma, similar to the program offered at the Yang Guang Qing School in Beijing.

More students at Clifford School begin studying English in a bilingual program in Kindergarten. The English skills of these students are very strong, thus facilitating their achievement in the Manitoba curriculum.

This past year Clifford School also offered Kindergarten to Grade 8 students an International program in which students follow the Manitoba curriculum for 80 percent of their day and study in Mandarin for the remainder of the day. Students from countries such as Korea, Australia, and the United States, as well as China, are enrolled in this program. The enrollment has doubled for the coming year. The school hopes to add one grade level per year to the International program. The first graduates of the program will receive their Manitoba high school diplomas in 2007.

Turn to page 7 for "Grade 12 Examinations Go Online"

Kindergarten to Grade 4 Physical Education/Health Education System-Wide Curriculum Implementation to Begin

Physically active and healthy lifestyles for all students is the vision of Manitoba's new curriculum for Kindergarten to Grade 4 Physical Education/Health Education, scheduled for implementation in the 2003-2004 school year. All Early Years teachers are expected to use the new student learning outcomes to guide their planning for instruction and assessment.

Kindergarten to Grade 4 Physical Education/Health Education: A Foundation for Implementation, released in 2001, is intended to support teachers with curriculum implementation. Recommended learning resources can be ordered from the Manitoba Text Book Bureau (see <http://www.mtbb.mb.ca>) or borrowed from the Instructional Resources Unit (Library) (see <http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/ks4/irs/>).

Key changes that may affect local planning include the combined curriculum approach for physical education and health education and the compulsory status of the learning outcomes related to potentially sensitive content (e.g., personal safety, substance use and abuse prevention, and human sexuality). Consequently, the Department has requested that each school or school division/district organize a planning process to address decisions such as:

- scheduling to meet the recommended minimum time allotments
- determining staffing and delivery models for the combined, integrated approach
- programming for potentially sensitive content, which includes providing a parental option and teacher training
- seeking parental involvement in the planning process

For assistance, visit our website at <http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/ks4/cur/physhlth> or contact Heather Willoughby, Consultant
Telephone: 204-945-8143
Email: hwilloughb@gov.mb.ca

Some Indicators of Academic Performance of French Immersion Students in Manitoba

In December 2002, the Bureau de l'éducation française (which oversees education delivered in French in Manitoba) organized, with the assistance of other organizations, a conference entitled *Building Connections*. At this conference, the Assessment and Evaluation Branch of Manitoba Education and Youth presented information on how well students in the French Immersion Program are performing academically. A summary follows.

Large-Scale Testing in Manitoba

Manitoba students participate in various assessments and tests that can be used to measure academic achievement of French Immersion students, as well as other population groups. The assessments include a provincial classroom-based assessment at Grade 3 (reading in English and French; numeracy in the language of instruction); and Grade 4 (reading in French for French Immersion students) referred to as the "Grade 3 Assessment." Students in Senior 4 (Grade 12) undergo end-of-course provincial assessments in the language arts (English and French—participating in the English assessment is optional for French Immersion Program and Français Program students); and mathematics (in the language of instruction).

At the discretion of school authorities, some students participate in optional provincial assessments in language arts in Grade 6, and in mathematics in Senior 1 (Grade 9).

Finally, samples of students have participated in Canada's national assessment program called the School Achievement Indicators Program (SAIP). The public report for the mathematics assessment administered in 2001, from which results are drawn below, is available at <http://www.cmec.ca/saip/math2001/indexe.stm>.

Grade 3 Assessment

Figure 1 demonstrates that, relative to the province of Manitoba as a whole (all students, all programs), higher proportions of French Immersion students met "expectations" in the three reading competencies (reflection, oral reading, comprehension) in English. French Immersion students also performed well in the area of numeracy. Further information can be found at <http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k4/assess/publications.html>.

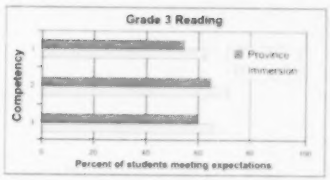

Figure 1

School Achievement Indicators Program (SAIP)

In the spring of 2001, samples of 13- and 16-year-old Canadian students underwent national testing in mathematics. In Manitoba, students participated according to language of instruction in mathematics. The results for Manitoba French Immersion Program students were separated from Français Program students for the purpose of this analysis.

For 13-year-olds, Manitoba French Immersion students performed at about the national and provincial averages. At 16 years old, French Immersion students performed at about the national average and slightly above English Program students.

Provincial Assessments

The average test score was approximately five percentage points higher for French Immersion students than for the province as a whole (all students, all programs) in the June 2002 Grade 6 English Language Arts provincial test. Similar results were seen in the January 2002 Senior 4 English Language Arts provincial test.

Other results indicate that French Immersion students had similar or slightly higher levels of academic achievement than the province as a whole in the subjects tested: Senior 4 English Language Arts—June 2002; Senior 1 Mathematics; Senior 4 Pre-Calculus Mathematics; Senior 4 Applied Mathematics; and Senior 4 Consumer Mathematics.

Conclusion

A question that can never be answered is how French Immersion students would have performed had they not been in a French Immersion Program. What these results demonstrate is that these students perform at least as well in English language arts and in mathematics as students whose studies are entirely in English, while developing proficiency in the French language along the way.

For additional information, contact

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New Computer Science Framework Released

Senior 2 (20S), Senior 3 (30S), and Senior 4 (40S) Computer Science: Manitoba Curriculum Framework of Outcomes (Draft, September 2003) is now available. The new framework identifies the student learning outcomes for computer science courses at Senior 2, Senior 3, and Senior 4.

A team of Manitoba computer science teachers developed the new framework after considering the current abilities and future needs of their students. Representatives of Red River College, the University of Manitoba, and Manitoba employers of computer programmers provided the development team with information and commented on the framework to ensure that computer science courses reflect the current demands of post-secondary education and Manitoba's information technology industry.

The framework is available on the Manitoba Education and Youth website at <http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/cur/cs/index.html>. Print copies of the document were sent to all Manitoba Senior Years schools in September 2003. Workshops to discuss the new computer science learning outcomes will be held during the fall and winter of 2003-2004. Teachers can register for the workshops at <https://www2.edu.gov.mb.ca/yag/>.

Schools may start implementation of the draft framework during the 2003-2004 school year. Teachers are invited to submit comments about the framework until the end of February 2003. The document will be revised, based on feedback received from schools, and will be distributed in its final form for the 2004-2005 school year. Full implementation is expected for 2005-2006.

Inquiries relating to the computer science framework may be directed to
Darryl Gervais, Consultant
Email: dgervais@gov.mb.ca
Telephone: 204-945-0294
Toll free: 1-800-282-8069 (ext. 0294)

CyberSchools Manitoba: An Educational Portal for Manitoba Students and Teachers

On January 22, 2003, Manitoba Education and Youth Minister Ron Lemieux and Energy, Science and Technology Minister Tim Sale announced the introduction of the CyberSchools Manitoba Internet Portal (the Portal) for all educators and students in Manitoba public schools.

The Portal is intended to provide a safe and secure environment for Manitoba students to develop their skills in using the Internet and technology. It will provide an online educational community that offers users personal email, a personal calendar, network file storage, and personal web space, and is available at no charge to all Kindergarten to Senior 4 students, teachers, administrators, and other school division/district staff. School division/district participation is optional.

Manitoba Education, Research and Learning Information Networks (MERLIN) is taking the lead in implementing the Portal Project. MERLIN coordinated a series of focus group consultations with school divisions/districts and Manitoba Education and Youth to define user requirements and to customize the Portal to meet their needs. Twenty-four out of thirty-eight school divisions/districts expressed interest in participating in the testing phase, which has been completed.

The transitioning phase, now underway, will be an ongoing process as school divisions/districts opt to use this service. The gradual rollout is targeted to begin in the fall of 2003.

The Portal has been designed and configured to provide the highest levels of safety and security for students. All Portal users must be registered and sign an acceptable use policy to receive a user ID through their school office before receiving Portal access. Anti-spam and anti-virus software will be used to safeguard email accounts.

Authorized users can access the Portal from the school, home, library, or any personal computer with an Internet connection and a current browser. Students can use this feature to work on assignments at school, save them to the Portal, and then access them from another location to continue working. Students can also take advantage of this feature to showcase their work for their parents from the home computer. Another useful feature is the personal calendar that can be used to mark in-service days, assignment due dates, sports practices, and other important dates. The secure features of the Portal support and enhance the delivery of educational services to students, teachers, parents, and administrators.

For more information, contact MERLIN
Email: info@merlin.mb.ca
Telephone: 1-800-430-6404

Promoting Aboriginal Student Success (PASS)

PASS was initiated in 2000 to recognize and support the educational and personal advancement of Aboriginal youth within the Lord Selkirk School Division in Selkirk, Manitoba. Since its beginnings, PASS has grown into one of the largest school and community partnership initiatives for Aboriginal youth attending school within the division.

The Lord Selkirk SD has a student population of approximately 5500. Of these students, approximately 1200 attend Lord Selkirk Regional Comprehensive Secondary School, the only high school in the division, known by students as the "Comp." Between September 2001 and June 2002, approximately 330 Aboriginal (First Nations, Inuit, and Metis) students were enrolled at the high school. This could mean one in every four students attending our high school, and as high as 25 percent of the total student population in the division, are of Aboriginal descent.

The PASS initiative now includes an annual full-day event celebrating the educational, cultural, and personal achievements of Aboriginal youth. This event features Aboriginal speakers who emphasize the importance of education and serve as role models and mentors for our youth. It also showcases musical performers and honours previous Aboriginal graduates. Parents and community members are encouraged to support youth in pursuing education and making healthy lifestyle choices.

Our Beginnings and Objectives

We started the PASS event in 2000 by inviting the community, youth, and parents to attend a number of meetings, out of which came the suggestion to host a small luncheon for parents of non-resident Aboriginal students. The decision to include Aboriginal youth, parents, and the community became the focus of the event. From there, more ideas started to flow, including the suggestion to nominate previous graduates to become PASS recipients and to talk to our youth about the pressures, benefits, and importance of staying in school.

Next, we wanted to showcase Aboriginal youth's talents in the areas of song, music, and dance. We also decided to invite our adult and youth leadership from the First Nations and Metis communities to talk about how we can improve our lifestyle choices through education and to encourage youth to pursue higher education.

We then addressed the issue of high-risk activities related to drugs, alcohol, and gangs. We invited Aboriginal role models (from various professions) to share information about prevention and to encourage our youth to "make the right choice" by saying "no" when tempted to get involved in high-risk activities and return to a healthy lifestyle path.

Finally, we decided to showcase PASS recipients at our annual celebration, presenting them with a certificate of recognition, a gold medallion, and an honorarium for their educational and personal achievements. Later, they would be invited to participate in our website, which provides youth with an avenue to connect with Aboriginal role models/mentors.

These objectives, along with the ongoing role modelling/mentoring by our adult committee and previous graduates, now provide our Aboriginal youth with a vision to complete high school and pursue higher education.

PASS Resources and Events

Check our website at <www.passmb.ca> for resources and upcoming events:

- *Educational Seminar on "Metis People's History and Culture".* On October 24, 2003, we will host our first educational seminar for teachers and professionals on Aboriginal education. We hope this venture will help us to become financially self-supporting. We plan to use a portion of the registration fees as "seed money" to establish a foundation for our Aboriginal youth. Interest gained from this sum can be used for Aboriginal youth initiatives, such as the annual PASS event and financial awards.
- *Annual Celebration.* For our next PASS event, scheduled for June 4, 2004, each school in the Lord Selkirk SD will be invited to identify its Aboriginal youth talent and participate in the celebration. We hope to have over 1000 youth in attendance, witnessing our success stories and Aboriginal culture.
- *Video.* To order a video about PASS, contact us through our website.

In wrapping up this brief snapshot of PASS, our committee hopes this idea can spread to and help other schools and communities.

Respectfully submitted by

Steve Richard
Aboriginal Education Consultant/Counselor
Lord Selkirk School Division

ASL for All

While they are a small minority, the 10 students in Grosvenor School's Deaf and Hard of Hearing Cluster Program communicate in a language everyone in the school understands. Thanks to the ASL for All program at Grosvenor School in Winnipeg, all students receive instruction in American Sign Language (ASL) for half an hour each week and Deaf and hard of hearing students are fully integrated in classes with hearing students. After offering the program for one year, everyone in the school community—students, teachers, and parents—is giving it rave reviews.

Principal Helen Strock is one of the program's many champions. Ms. Strock is most impressed with the way the program strengthens ties and builds community. "Inclusion has to be more than an invitation," Ms. Strock says. "You need to create a culture that embraces diversity. ASL for All is an example of how you can create a culture of inclusion."

When they reflected upon the past school year at the end of June, students placed the ASL for All program at or near the top of their lists of favourite things. Students were particularly positive about the annual Deaf and Hard of Hearing Awareness Week, in which sharing circles provided Deaf and hard of hearing students with the opportunity to communicate their experiences with their hearing counterparts. Parents and teachers were also pleased with the program, most echoing Ms. Strock's observations about inclusion. "I've really noticed the Deaf and hard of hearing children are more involved in social activities such as birthday parties," says parent Ivy Ramalius. "They're just treated more like normal kids. I think the program is great."

The ASL for All program has provided so many benefits in the area of education, inclusion, and community building that Ms. Strock cannot contain her enthusiasm for it. "You need to create a culture that embraces diversity. ASL for All is an example of how you can create a culture of inclusion."

"You need to create a culture that embraces diversity."

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The newsletter includes articles from the education community and from Manitoba Education and Youth. Signed articles appearing in this magazine express the views of their authors and not necessarily those of the Department.

Distribution:

Education Manitoba is distributed free to schools in Manitoba. This newsletter can be viewed online at <www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/newsletter/index.html>.

A similar document has been developed by the Bureau de l'éducation française Division for the Français and the French Immersion Programs.

Contact Information:

We invite contributions to *Education Manitoba*. When forwarding submissions, please include your name, and telephone number and send materials in print and electronic formats to:

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We also want to hear what you think about our newsletter. Please send your comments, ideas, and suggestions to the address specified above.

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